

ESSEX BUS NEWS

The Monthly Magazine Of The ESSEX BUS ENTHUSIASTS GROUP

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(Formerly the EASTERN NATIONAL ENTHUSIASTS GROUP)

ISSUE No.310



Leyland Olympian 4512 was the last vehicle in the fleet in an NBC style livery. As we went to press it was painted into new livery.

(I Ransom)

ROCHFORD MEETING

The next meeting at the Freight House will be held on March 13th and will be a video show. The meeting commences at 8pm and all are welcome.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TIMETABLES FOR SALE - Mostly 1950/60 Southern England, and some pre-war LT Working Timetables 1950's. LPTB/LT Maps 1937-76. LT Magazine 1959-66. PSV Circle newsheets 1970s. About 300 items. Send large SAE for list to Robin Symons, 4 Whitehall Mews, Bramshill Close, Arborfield, RG2 9QL.

EASTERN NATIONAL LIMITEDGeneral

Further to 309/7 with regard to the loan of East Kent 7782 the M & D and East Kent Bus Club have provided the following information, one report received by them was that the vehicle was first seen in service on 30.8.89 and last used on 1.9.89 although the date of return was given as 3.9.89. Nicholas King editor of their newsheet saw it in Ponders End depot on the evening of 2.9.89 with East Kent blinds fitted, although a group member saw it in service earlier in the day. To add another angle East Kent quote the loan as being 25.8.89 to 2.9.89. Therefore I tend to agree with Nicholas who states that 7782 appears to have been at Ponders End from 29.8.89 to 2.9.89 and used in service on at least three days. The storm force winds on 25.1.90 caused problems for the Countys bus and Coach operators with double deckers having to be taken off the road in some area. In Clacton services to Jaywick were suspended and the Clacton/Walton service could not operate across Holland Marshes. The 1345 7A from West Bergholt made local news when CR 3127 was blown off the road between Peldon Rose Inn and The Strood, ending up at a 45° angle in a ditch, it appears that only the depth of the ditch prevented the bus from going onto its side. The driver and around a dozen passengers escaped injury. A few minutes later a furniture van was blown over at the same spot coming to rest on the rear offside corner of the VR. The East Anglian Daily Times of 26/1/90 featured a dramatic picture of the incident. Recovery was undertaken the following day by John Canham of Chelmsford which resulted in the road having to be closed. Once the task was complete severe damage could be seen which included the platform area being missing, however Bristols superb workman-ship meant that the vehicle was capable of being driven a couple of hundred yards onto a farm shop forecourt. The accident did not occur on the Strood as reported on local radio had it done it would have landed in the sea around two hours after high tide and at best serious injury to passengers. Member Geoff Toon has for sale sets of 12 colour prints and detailed description of the recovery. Please send a cheque for £5.75 including post and made payable to him to G. Toon, 30 Wavell Drive Colchester. The Evening Gazette has reported that some Grey Green/EN commuter services are to cease from March as the OFT considered the agreement between the companies contained too many "anti-competitive clauses. We feel if they compete prices will fall". As a result ENs season ticket from Colchester rises to £1150 p.a. from £1088 with less journeys to choose from. No further comment is required. Walthamstow and Ponders End depots were on strike on 8.1.90 over London Weighting payments.

Unusual Workings

13.1.90 BS 1501 on service 59 (normally a Tiger)
 26.1.90 SD 4508 on service 251
 30.1.90 BD 0242 on service 251 (observed on 1735 ex Walthamstow)
 BN 3120 was on loan to Walthamstow during late January.

Vehicle Allocations

7/89 3030 Pool - D/L (D)

Repaints

w.e. 29.7.89 4511 at ENE

w.e. 7.10.89 1757 at HH

w.e. 14.10.89 1797 at BN (Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority)

w.e. 23.12.89 3205 at CN (Autotrader overall advert)

w.e. 27.1.90 1922 at BN (Crow Windscreens advert). 4015 at CN

4017 is now reported as being painted w/e 30.12.89. Can someone provide confirmation?

A date for 1779 is not available our best guess being w/e 25.11.89.

Disposal - Initial

3030 (NPU 977M) Both sold to Peterborough PVS for scrap, 2/90 after

3210 (XNV 833S) removal of spares.

Disposals - Subsequent

1300 (XHK 213X) Colbourne & Pulham, Newton Abbot, by 11/89, ex Hills, Tredegar.

1303 (LLT 344V) Last report was in Mag. 283 when vehicle was returned to Arlington (dealer), Enfield, 8/87 after expiration of lease. Now noted with Hayward, Reading 1/90. (where has it been in the interim?)

1405 (VHK 178L) North (dealer), Sherburn, 6/89, ex St. Gregorys R.C. High School, Warrington (N-PSV).

1540 (PEV 502K) Withdrawn by Citybus Ltd., Belfast, 709, 10/89, maliciously destroyed. (listed in Mag.309 but not reported in this section)

1701 (WNO 550L) Re-instated by Bott, Abergynolwyn, by 9/89. (see also Mag. 304)

1713 (WNO 562L) Yorkshire Terrier (Baldwib, Beighton) by 10/89, ex East Midland Motor Services Ltd., Chesterfield, 534.

3021 (OWC 294K) Sold at ADT auction, 11/89, ex Nosebag Mobile Cafe (N-PSV) Birkenhead.

3023 (OWC 296K) Sold by Wright, Mancot, by 9/89.

3031 (NPU 978M) It is believed that these vehicles were only re-certified

3036 (NPU 983M) by Alexander, Sheffield for PVS (dealer), Barnsley (see Mag 301). Hence they should not be regarded as being acquired by Alexander.

Correction to Mag 290. 1547 (SWV 275K) should read 1545 (SVW 273K) (also clarifies Mag.307).

Commuter Services

From 5.3.90 following claims of unfair competition the joint EN/Grey Green services will become operated at arms length. EN will operate services 192, 193 and 194 whilst Grey Green operate the remainder. Tickets will only be valid on the vehicles of the operator on which they were issued.

Publicity

EN leaflets for services 192 & 193; 194 both dated 5.3.90. and for service 712 dated 15.1.90.

REVIEW OF THE DECADE

The following is a brief history of Eastern National over the past decade and is by no means comprehensive. If you find any errors please let the News sheet editor know.

Jan 80 3067-3071 enter service on 400, final series one National into service at HD (1924) BN lose last FLF 2945, last MW withdrawn 1440 from CN.

Apr 80 First Leyland National 2s arrive, SD loses last manual gearbox FLF. Harwich loses last FLF (2842).

Jun 80 BS,HD,MN all lose last FLF.

Jul 80 Golden Jubilee CW open day, 3048 painted into a special livery to mark the occasion.

Sep 80 Six VRs acquired from Southdown for Driver Training. BE,CN,CR lose last FLF as a result of Traffic Action Plan biggest service revision since April 1965.

Oct 80 Last new Leyland National 1939 delivered, four FLF relicensed at BN for RRS.

Dec 80 BN loses temporary FLF allocation, last manual gearbox FLFs withdrawn.

Feb 81 First RE buses withdrawn.

Jun 81 Wood Green closed. 1404 returns rebuilt by ECW. SD & BD lose last FLF. 3095 becomes CR first new decker since 11/66. 2905 loaned to BS. First YMQS arrives.

Jul 81 1300 first new coach since May 1973. HH loses last FLF leaving CF with FLFs.

Aug 81 Ford buses withdrawn. Prittlewell closes.

Sep 81 Last FLF withdrawn 2916 on 11.9.

Oct 81 Last VR arrives. Open Top FLFs withdrawn. 3114 at BS first new decker since 11/64.

Dec 81 First Olympian arrives.

May 82 2200 becomes first disabled bus at CF.

Jun 82 LHs re-enter service after 11 months off road only to be withdrawn before the end of the month.

Jul 82 1302/3 acquired from Fox Hayes.

Dec 82 First RE coach withdrawn.

Jan 83 Service 19 withdrawn (Southend to Maldon) BN lose last REs.

Feb 83 SD loses last RE bus. Joint commuter services introduced.

Mar 83 first Tiger/Alexander arrives. BD & HH lose last RE.

Jun 83 1200 - 11 withdrawn.

Nov 83 Last Tiger/Alexander arrives.

Jan 84 Last YMT withdrawn.

Mar 84 Halstead depot closed.

Jul 84 LNs acquired from Alder Valley.

Aug 84 Metroliners arrive.

Oct 84 Ex Ribble Leopards arrive.

Jan 85 1128/9 arrive. Last RE coaches withdrawn (except 1409)

Feb 85 4500 etc start to arrive.

Apr 85 SE lose last RE

Jun 85 CF lose last RE

Jul 85 193 & W9 commences. MN lose last RE

Sep 85 CR lose last RE

Nov 85 Minibuses for Clacton start to arrive

Jan 86 New livery appears

Feb 86 BS & DT loses last RE. five Nationals acquired from SWT for spares.

Mar 86 1130 - 1133 arrive. BE lose 1542 their last RE leaving 1554 at CN

Apr 86 1554 withdrawn

May 86 Coastline starts. EN commence 20,167,206,252-4 & 275 from WW. Vehicles arrive on short term loan from UCOG

Jun 86 3026 & 3027 rebuilt to open top. Four Mercedes on loan from M & D.

Jul 86 4510 - 12 arrive

Aug 86 South Woodham O/S opens.

310/5

Sep 86 Operation of 307 commences. Chartercoach (Coastal Red) start up between Colchester and Harwich.
Oct 86 Four Leyland Nationals swapped with Wilts & Dorset. Vehicles return to M & D and UCUC. Deregulation.
Nineteen VRs acquired from Milton Keynes. Three Bovas return from lease to NT London.
Nov 86 Minibus services commence in Brentwood, Chelmsford and South Woodham.
Dec 86 Last use of Setright machines. MN last depot converted.
Jan 87 Eastern National privatisation.
Jan 87 Ponders End opens. Operation of 359 commences
Mar 87 Bovas withdrawn
May 87 Crew operation returns with KSWs at CN
Jun 87 South Woodham minibus service withdrawn. SD depot closes. PL reopens.
First normal LN withdrawals commence
Aug 87 Initial batch of Transits withdrawn
Oct 87 Final Leopards (except ECW) withdrawn
Dec 87 Metroliners withdrawn
Feb 88 Coastal Red taken over, Tellyn commuter services taken over.
May 88 Last flat front VR withdrawn (3022 at DT)
Jul 88 Lynxes start to arrive
Aug 88 Silver End closed
Sep 88 New CN depot opened
Jan 89 Bedford YMQS withdrawn as W9 is converted to minibus
Mar 89 W13 & W14 started
May 89 1131-1133 withdrawn. 3039 & 3040 withdrawn the final vehicles in NBC livery.

SERVICE REVISIONS IN ESSEX

Saffron Walden, Bishops Stortford, Braintree

- 7 From 30.1.90 this service was revised to commence from Stambourne, Butchers Arms at 0920 and operates via Toppesfield (0930), Gt Yeldham (0935) and Lt. Yeldham at 0939 thence as shown. The return from Halstead is also extended to Stambourne and replaces service 11 with was withdrawn
11 Withdrawn by Heddinghams.
59 From 5.2.90 the 1128 ex Audley End was retimed to 1140 whilst the 1240 was retimed to 1245. From the same date the 1927 operates three minutes later.
321 The service extended to Bocking, Courtaulds was revised to terminate/start from Deanery Gardens from an unknown date.

Clacton, Harwich

- 103 From 4.1.90 the 0817 ex Transit Camp was revised to start from Ramsey Castle at 0815.

Harlow

The bus station closed on 7.1.90 for rebuilding work to be carried out, a temporary facility has been provided in Post Office Road.

Loughton, Epping

- 253 Further to 309/8 the 1530 journey continues to operate Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday departure is 1555.

Chelmsford, Maldon

- 98 From 5.2.90 departures from Southminster were revised to 1759, 1839 and 1919 with departure being held for up to twenty minutes if the train is late
99 From 5.2.90 the 1540 from Broomfield was revised to depart at 1620. The 1120 ex Broomfield is re-routed via Southminster and no longer serves Ostend. The 1250 ex Burnham departs 1300 and is re-routed via Southminster and also no longer serves Ostend.

Basildon

- 21 The 0730 and 0810 ex North Benfleet and 0750 and 0830 ex Basildon are operated by District Bus under contract to ECC.
- 388,389 From 5.2.90 an additional journey from Basildon Bus Stn was introduced at 0820 to Horndon. The 1815 ex Aveley was re-routed to serve Horndon at 1854 then operating five minutes later to Basildon Bus Stn arriving at 1910.

Grays, Tilbury

- 303 Harris introduced an additional journey on Mondays to Saturdays at 0730 from Grays to Romford on 27.1.90.
- 373 County introduced additional journeys from Grays Bus Stn to Aveley, Usk Road at 1607 & 1707 on Mondays to Fridays from 27.1.90.
- 375 The 1807 ex Orsett terminates at Grays on Saturdays.
- 376,378 Revised timetables introduced from 27.1.9

COLCHESTER BOROUGH TRANSPORT

Dennis Javelin coaches 106 & 105 arrived on 17 and 19.1.90 respectively, further details next month. 106 has been noted on driver familiarisation

A white car with CBT Coachways sign writing has also been sighted, with its first work being on 30.1.90.

With the 5.24 from Monkwick now running to Buxted as a Service 8B, CBT now operate the inward and outward peak journeys for this village. What is unusual in this? The morning journey is operated by the smallest type in the fleet, MRs (31 seat) while the evening journey can see the biggest in one of the ex Tyne & Wear Atlanteans (82 seats).

The turning circle at Highwoods (Tesco) is to be upgraded at a cost of £9000 according to press reports once funding has been sorted out between CBT, Tescos and ECC. The limited space is causing vehicles to be damaged.

Tuesday 22nd January saw an unusual incident which involved an "armed hold up" according to the Evening Gazette a man stopped a bus in Osborne Street with a handgun. After an incident with the driver he ran off. The Yellow Advertisers version is that the man had a row with passengers on a bus from Greenstead. On arrival at Osborne Street an inspector was called and while he was on the upper deck talking to witnesses the gun was pointed at a woman on the lower deck. Police later stated that the firearm was a toy cap gun and that a man detained under the Mental Health Act was helping with their enquiries into this incident and a litter bin fire at Severalls Hospital. (It is not known if it was Ser 1 or 4 involved - the man was obviously in need of an 81)

A Lynx is now allocated to Service 4/4A, starting with 0657 from Garage to Greenstead the car schedule which provided the "all night" bus on Ser 4 (ie it runs the evening service) Other allocation changes are Ser 2B at 0909 ex Highwoods is now AN worked, whilst the 0803 ex Severalls on ser 8 and the Thursdays only 77 are now Metrorider worked. The ex T & W ANs remain in service although no longer restricted to the 8.

During the high winds on 25th January Lynxs 32 & 40 replaced the allocated buses on Services 7/7A during the morning. From late afternoon all services terminated at Peldon "The Rose" as the police were only allowing cars to proceed to Mersea Island. It is not clear if passing cars were stopped to convey passengers to their destination or if police vehicles were used. Many other routes were blocked by fallen trees etc and numerous diversions took place. On other routes deckers remained on the road but it was noticeable that they were running much slower than usual. Lynxs replaced most if not all deckers in the evening. Once the wind dropped some rail replacements were commenced with those between Thorpeand Clacton/Walton continuing the next day.

Bus 94, Q486MHK, the Scammell recovery vehicle is to be replaced with an as yet unregistered, which is in fleet livery. Metrorider 11 now carries a GB sticker !

SOUTHEND TRANSPORT LIMITED

These notes are correct to February 6.

Vehicles

ACQUIRED: of the 9 LN's reported last month, 713-6 remain the only ones in service (still in their hybrid liveries). There is no news yet about the fate of the rest of the batch. It seems that 3 of the 9 were actually still in use by London & Country on the day that they were collected. Of the 3 towed in, 2 are known to be XPG 240N and LPB 181P, both ex Chelsham. Also from that shed came UPE 199M and LPB 217P, while others came from Guildford (LPB 185P), Godstone (GPD 298N) and Leatherhead (LPB 218P); it is not known where the other two (HPF 316N & NPK 241R) originated from. Collection was mainly on December 11-14.

MODIFIED: 250 (Q475 MEV) was duly converted back to Leyland power but its old Gardner engine has been sold, thus 211 (JTD 391P) remains a Leyland. There are now no longer any Gardner engined buses in the fleet. 210 (JTD 390P) is in the works and its conversion to open top has started. It will also be converted to one door layout. 215 (JTD 395P) will not be converted until 210 is finished. We presume that these two buses will be renumbered into the 9xx series after conversion. 208 (JTD 388P) was repainted into fleet livery in February. It had been an overall advert for Dansk Design since October 1982 (albeit with a repaint in August 1987).

508 (BTE 208V) is currently delicensed & has been returned to the coach-builders for repair to front n/s accident damage, sustained on Jan 31. Routemaster 106 has recently received part of the rear end from the spares bus, RM205, following accident damage. The repair is extremely neat and only interior LT fleetnumbers identify the donor! A new coach livery should have emerged by the time that these notes are published - it is thought that 550 will be the first vehicle so treated.

SERVICE VEHICLES: a new addition is numbered 010, a Ford Orion car (G350 WWC) for the Engineering Director.

WITHDRAWN/INITIAL DISPOSALS:

206	JTD 386P)	Withdrawn and sold, 2/90, to Ensign Bus Services,
207	JTD 387P)	Purfleet
526	KAD 351V	Withdrawn 2/90 and returned to Plaxton Sales and Marketing (formerly Arlington), ex lease
604	JEV 245Y	Withdrawn, ex stored, and sold to Fords Coaches of Althorne, 2/90!! Repainted by ST prior to sale.
902	WJN 372J)	Withdrawn 2/90, ex store, and sold to Appleby Coaches,
903	WJN 373J)	Bridlington

The third open top Fleetline, 901 (WJN 371J), was already withdrawn and had been cannibalised at the garage; it was removed to the works at the beginning of February and has been scrapped. Thus the last of the 26 J registered Fleetlines (Southend's first rear engined buses) delivered in 1971 has been withdrawn, after 19 years of service.

SUBSEQUENT DISPOSALS:

385	GHJ 385L	Moseley, Taunton (dlr) to Carlisle District Crime Prevention Panel (non psv, mobile roadshow) by 1/90. In a blue livery; based at Penrith.
367	WJN 367J	Further to 309/13, the Crosville Wales fleet number is HDG 932.

525 FDF 265T Noted with Carragher, Castleblaney (Ireland) in 3/89.
 (260) --- ---E In 291/8 we reported the fate of the two DAF MB230/
 Duple 320 coaches ordered by ST but never operated,
 and noted that one had chassis number 275698 and went
 to Davie of Rye as E761 HJF. The PSV Circle now say that it was in fact
 chassis no 275652 and became E597 LVH with KF Cars, Gatwick. Can anyone
 clarify? Incidentally, the other DAF (which became Metrobus E957 GGX
 was never in ST livery, despite the Circle's comments. One of our
 members actually saw it delivered to ST in dealer stock white!

DEMONSTRATORS: the Dennis Dart with Duple B39F body was finally
 received from Dennis in January for evaluation: registered G541 JBV, it
 was used from January 16 to 22 and was allocated fleetnumber 401. In a
 red and white livery, it was used on a variety of routes, including 1A,
 9A, 18 and 24. It is not clear if this is the same vehicle which was
 examined last July while it was unregistered.

General

A number of coaches are carrying the two versions of the 'Drive in a bus
 lane and you're a clot' posters on their boot doors; many London Buses
 vehicles also carry these adverts in a joint campaign with the
 Metropolitan Police. It should also be noted that 508 was the only
 coach to receive the 'London Express' boot door lettering and this will
 be removed shortly.

A further edition of ST's fleet list is now available from them (at 87
 London Rd, Southend, SS1 1PP), dated 1/90, price 50p. The cover rather
 interestingly features a picture of the former 254 (withdrawn last
 summer) with the old crest/fleetname!

A revised style of Wayfarer ticket was introduced late last year: an
 example appears below. The previous style of ticket was illustrated in
 issue 294/14.

VEL INFORMATION ☎ 0702-355711

TRAVEL INFORMATION ☎ 0702-355711

TRAVEL INFORMATION ☎ 0702-355711

TRAV.

90333 13:52 22JAN90 333

STL203 90333 13:52 22JAN90 333

**Southend
Transport**

Issued subject
to published
conditions

**Southend
Transport**

Issued subject
to published
conditions

**Southend
Transport**

Issued subject
to published
conditions

5.000 £0.40 ADULT SL

2394

5.000 £0.40 ADULT SL

The hurricane of Thursday January 25 inevitably caused disruptions to
 services. Compared to the previous hurricane of October 1987, there
 were no significant road closures in the Southend area but some services
 had to be modified whilst the winds were at their strongest. One 4A was
 curtailed at North Shoebury Corner and then a National replaced the
 scheduled decker. Also in the Shoebury area, 7A's were stopped at North
 Shoebury Corner and 7's and 8's at Ness Road (Danger Bridge) with the
 Iveco providing a shuttle service over the rest of these routes. 12
 was also converted to single deck after 254 had been blown off the road
 near Canewdon. 238 suffered a similar fate near Billericay on rail
 replacement work but neither was seriously damaged and both were back in
 service the next day. 225 had a window blown in!

In Central London conditions were appalling with traffic at a standstill
 and many roads - including The Embankment - closed. X services were
 reported running up to four and a half hours late! Some duplicates were
 provided to cater for stranded rail passengers.

British Rail inevitably suffered far greater problems, with the overhead wires down or obstructed. A major bus replacement service operated on the Thursday evening and night and in some cases for much of the Friday as well, covering: Southend Victoria to Shenfield, Wickford to Southminster, Shoebury to Upminster and various cross links between GE and LTS line stations. ST were in fact on the Southminster branch until late on the Sunday. As well as ST, operators noted on ERS work were Lynxline, Stephensons, Woods, M & E. Nelsons, Blue Triangle, District Bus, Simien, Greenham Coachlines and Ensign. It is thought that EN did not participate, at least in south Essex. It is reported that there were near riots at Shenfield when trains from London (which had run at 20 mph in view of the danger of obstructions) finally arrived and people tried to catch the buses. The sub editor luckily had gone to great lengths (about 3,500 miles in fact) to avoid these problems!, and thus missed the sight of 3 RT's in Southend in passenger use (2 Ensign and 1 Blue Triangle).

OTHER OPERATORS - South East Essex

Fords Coaches, Althorne: have acquired ex ST Van Hool Astromega JEV 245Y. News of its intended use would be welcomed!

Lynxline, Sth Woodham: Saturday service 60A was to be slightly retimed from March 3 and a new service 60C introduced, Rochford Fire Station to Newington Avenue via Sutton Cemetery (1 journey each way, Saturdays, positioning for 60A, at 0820 out, 1530 return).

Stephensons, Southend: various service changes were due to take place from March 5:

60/60A Rerouted between Prittlewell and Eastwood via Cuckoo Corner and Prince Avenue instead of Fairfax Drive/Hospital/Bridgewater Drive. The M-F daytime service will be extended from Eastwood Rise to Rayleigh High Street; a pm peak journey is extended to Hullbridge, and one journey each way on schooldays runs to/from Westcliff High Schools. Inward journeys ex Rayleigh will double run via CBS. The timetable is also slightly revised.

224 An additional commercial journey will be added from March 9 on Fridays, Chelmsford to Wickford & return (1015 out, 1131 return).

31C New service, Chelmsford Retail Market to Great Baddow, Maldon Rd via Baddow Road; Tue & Sat only, three journeys ex Chelmsford at 1015, 1045 & 1115, between 224 contract operations.

The expected sale of ex Northern General Leopard bus CCN911D for preservation fell through and the vehicle is therefore available for sale to any interested members: contact the sub-editor on 0702 588590.

T V Taxis, Southend: the 64S, Southend to Newington Avenue, is the latest route to have its registration split (from 24/1) between the taxi bus licenced partnership and the PSV licenced limited company. One of the older VW 8 seaters, A231 AAK has been withdrawn and is for sale, and it is thought that 3 19 seat Transits may have been bought.

Walkers Taxi Bus, Stanford le Hope: a new vehicle is Ford Transit G724 RGA, with the standard Ford factory body, in light blue.

AND FINALLY . . . the County Council's plan to replace the old series of 11 area timetable books with just 2 issues - North Essex and South Essex, has been delayed by staff shortages and problems with the computer typesetting process. The South book, originally planned for March, is not now expected until May at best, with the first North book following in July.

SOUTHEND TRANSPORT IN THE 1980's

The 1980's were a decade of great contrast for ST, yet there are many similarities between the company that entered the 1990's and the municipal undertaking of 10 years earlier. On 1/1/80 the fleet stood at 84 vehicles - Leopard single deckers 201-4 (coaches) & 200/15-8 (buses), PD3's 333-5/8/40-3/5-7 & open toppers 311-4, and Fleetlines 221-30, 348-97. Ten years later, the operational fleet was virtually the same size, standing at 86 (plus 12 stored vehicles); the middle of the decade had seen an explosion in the fleet size, which peaked at the end of 1984/start of 1985 when it reached almost 130 vehicles, with no less than 60 coaches.

Many of the events of the eighties were unexpected and went against 'conventional' trends. The ST of 1990 has a fleet which is less standardised than that of 10 years earlier and runs more crew operated, traditional open platform buses than in 1980! The intervening years had witnessed the inception, rise and subsequent decline of X1 and its derivatives, a route which brought great interest to enthusiasts with a myriad of hired and acquired coaches, but which so nearly bankrupted the company.

So what was the ST of 1980 like? The decade opened true to form with 5 buses hired out to another operator (Darlington, using Fleetlines). 'No change' was the order of the day on OMO buses, and Videmats were still very much in evidence (the latter were not finally eliminated until April 1985; the former was finally scrapped in December 1986); the 6 month experiment with Autofare machines on the 29 was about to be declared a failure. Crew operation was still important although the PD3's were on the way out - indeed, most were unserviceable at the start of 1980. The open top version was eliminated in July 1980 after 311's farewell run on the 14th of that month. The last closed top PD3, 347, lasted almost exactly a year longer, the final day being 31/7/81.

EN's open top FLF's were hired to ST again in the summer of 1980 and we expected that that was the last time that ST would operate Bristols: who would have thought then that 3 RELL's would later be owned, from 301's arrival in Jan 1984 to 303's withdrawal in March '87? Of course, other far more unusual acquisitions were to take place!

The London express services inevitably dominate the decade. 206 became the first municipal bus to operate an unlicensed express service under the 1980 Transport Act when it left CBS at 0630 on October 26th 1980 on X1. Ten minutes later, it became the first municipal bus to break down on an unlicensed express service!! (and was replaced by 202 for the journey to Reading). Jointly operated with Reading Transport, X1 had a fairly uneventful early life - until the rail strikes of 1982 (January/February and June/July). After the second series of strikes traffic really took off. Meanwhile, differences of opinion had led to a split from Reading, each operator providing their own service from May 17, 1982. Steady traffic growth necessitated the hiring of Colchester Leopard coach 102 in May 1983; more short term hires followed until a peak was reached in December that year, when 13 coaches were on loan. In total, at least 25 different coaches were received on short term hire; the last was Burnley short Leopard 13, returned in January 1985 (after a long sojourn out of action with accident damage).

The short term hires were soon replaced by secondhand coaches on long term leases or bought outright. New coaches also caused great interest. The first Tigers for a municipality were ST's 209/10 in February 1982. Being only 11m long they were rare, but the next deliveries really did cause a stir! Van Hool Astromegas 243-5 (received in April 1983) could truly claim to be the most unusual municipal purchases ever. More conventional double deck coaches were later to appear on X1 in the form of the 6 Cardiff East Lincs bodied Olympians hired in the 1986-8 period.

Space does not permit us to chronicle all the trials and tribulations that X1 caused, but mention must be made of what was perhaps the greatest mistake - from April 1 (note the date!) 1987 ST took over the Culturebus service in London. It was abandoned only eight and a half months later, by which time ST was perilously close to bankruptcy.

Let us return to happier times, to take a quick look at some of the vehicle changes in the decade. Fleetline 242, delivered in June 1981, was numerically the last of its type ever made; it was not until April 1989 that ST were to take their next brand new double deck bus (Olympian 261). In the meanwhile DMS type Fleetlines had made an appearance in January 1984 (initially running in LT red); ultimately 11 were added to the fleet, the last going in December 1988. Acquiring DMS's was predictable and quite in character - but who expected that the loan of RM1571 from a preservationist early in 1987, or the short term hire of 5 'Original London Sightseeing Tour' RM's from London Coaches in November and December of that year would be followed by the purchase of no less than 14 RM's (plus one for spares)? 111's debut on the 29 on September 2nd 1988 saw a welcome return to old fashioned crew operated service. In fact, crew operation had continued throughout the decade - but only just!! between June and August 1988 conductors were only to be seen on a couple of peak hour workings.

Other vehicle changes saw a variety of rebuilds and re-engining, not all of it successful, it has to be said. The rebodysing of five L reg Fleetlines was protracted, with the first not re-entering service as a Q until March 1st, 1985 when the old 377 emerged as 306. The upgrading of two elderly Leopards with Berkhof coach bodies was even more fraught with technical problems and neither 254 nor 255 lasted very long with ST. What a shame that ST were not able to afford to keep the Berkhof bodied Volvo B10M, 300, operated in the early months of 1985. Demonstrators appeared from time to time, including a Leyland/DAB artic and a Neoplan Skyliner in the summer of 1982. Visits by Optare City Pacer demonstrators led to 6 entering the fleet in July 1987, only the third set of 'mini/midibuses' in ST's entire history (the first being the original 7 buses of 1914, and the second the four ex Canadian Air Force Dodges of the late 1940's). The best that can be said about the City Pacers is that they were probably at least as successful as their predecessors!! The last of the faithful closed top J registered Fleetlines left the fleet in October 1984 when 368 was withdrawn; the open top variant finally succumbed just as the decade ended.

For other reasons, similarities between fleet of 1990 and that of 10 years earlier are not immediately obvious: the coach livery changed from two tone blue to yellow, starting with 202 at the beginning of 1983, while the bus livery has much more recently been altered more subtly. The renumbering of July 1988 has caused the greatest break with the past. Thus it is not immediately obvious that the December 31, 1989 fleet line up, which comprised coaches 502/5/8/9/11/21 (Leopard), 531-3/45-51 (Tiger), 581/2 (DAF) & 605/6 (Astromege), Leyland Nationals 701-10/3-6, Routemasters 101-14, Fleetlines 208/10-2/5/6/21-42/50-4, Olympians 261, 398/9 and Ivecos 411/2, contains some 21 survivors from 10 years earlier. Oh yes, and 334 - one of the bigger surprises of 1988 was the return of a PD3 to the fleet, albeit only for training use; it is pleasing to see that 334 also perpetuates the traditional blue and cream livery.

It would be impossible to cover service changes in a brief review such as this. Perhaps though we should just mention three 'out of the area' ventures which tend to be overshadowed by X1. ST became the first municipal operator to run a Green Line route when it started the 795 to Brighton on April 1st, 1984 (jointly with EN, LCBS & Southdown). 795 remains with us as a summer only operation but the other two were short lived - X2 to Maidstone on Saturdays, and X23, Beckton to Central London (now, of course, resurrected by East London as the X15!). ST vehicles in fact travelled much further from home base than just the neighbouring counties, mainly on private hires. The rail strikes of 1982 saw ST coaches operating London or Kettering to Aberdeen for Alexander Northern (with the odd Aberdeen town service in between!) while Astromegas ventured as far as Spain and Italy at least twice during the decade (243 in May 1986 for Stockdale of Selby, and 257 in summer 1987 for Plymouth Citybus).

I have left the most significant event of the decade to the end of this review. The Transport Act of 1985 changed for ever the status of ST and exposed it to far greater competitive pressures than perhaps ever before. The full implications of that change are still being digested, and more changes will follow before too long as the Government compels local authorities to divest their bus companies. Deregulation saw

the end of the Southend co-ordination agreement, the joint operating agreement with Eastern National which had shaped so much of ST's history since the early 1950's. It also signalled the end of a long period of stable management - GM Ken Mellor retired in 1986 after 17 years with ST as DGM and latterly as the 'main man'. The representative of the old school, Derek Giles, remained to try to cope with the new competitive environment, latterly as Operations Director, but was finally replaced in February 1988 after 35 years with Southend Transport. To many people, he was Mr Southend Transport.

Despite all the changes recorded above, and despite bad weather, bank holidays, financial crises and the occasional strike, one interesting fact emerges about the decade just ended: Southend Transport provided a bus service in south Essex on every single day of that decade. How many other operators can claim such a record of service in their locality?

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